

STEVENSONS'S SHRINE

The RECORD of a PILGRIMAGE



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STEVENSON'S SHRINE



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STEVENSON'S SHRINE

THE RECORD OF A PILGRIMAGE

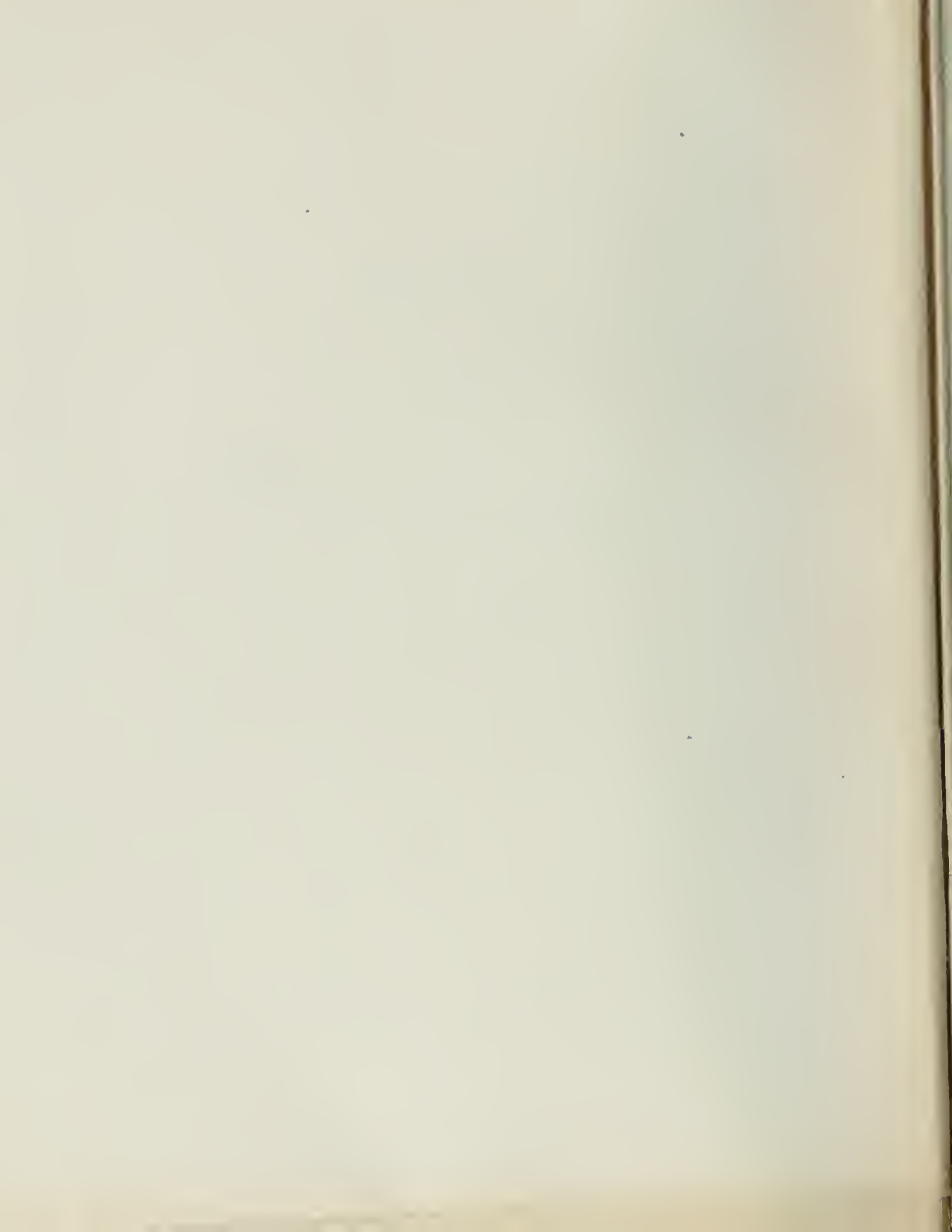
By LAURA STUBBS

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ING SAMOA AND SOCIETY ISLANDS

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ISLANDS

Waterland I.

PAUMOTU OR

Disappointment I.

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ARCHIPELAGO

Gloucester I.

Barrow I.

ARCHIPELAGO

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Group

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Morone I.

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Oeno I.

Henderson or

Elizabeth I.

Pitcairn I. (Br.)

Ducie I. (Br.)

aro I.

Rapi (Fr.)

Bass I.

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CHAPTER I

“The first love, the first sunrise, the first South Sea Island, are memories apart and touch a virginity of sense.”

“My soul went down with these moorings whence no windlass may extract nor any diver fish it up.”

Robert Louis Stevenson.

I A LOVER of the man, personally unknown to me, save through the potency of his pen, journeyed across the world in order to visit his grave, and to get into direct touch with his surroundings.

The voyage to the Antipodes does not come within the compass of this little book ; enough that in September, 1892, I left Auckland (New Zealand) in the Union Company's Steamship Manipouri, for a cruise among the South Sea Islands, and that our first port of call was Nukualofa, one of the Tongan group.

Here I stood on a little grass-covered wharf, and, looking down through the translucent water, made my first acquaintance with a coral garden. Oh ! that wonderful water world with its wealth of sprays, flowers, and madrepores, amongst which the tiny rainbow-coloured fishes darted in and out like submarine humming-birds—wingless, but brilliant—living flecks of colour, flashing through a fairy region. The unreality of the scene took hold of me. If this were real I must be enchanted, looking downwards with enchanted eyes.

As one who dreams I walked inland, following a most fascinating green turf path soft as velvet to the tread. There are no roads in Nukualofa, green turf paths serve instead ; indeed the whole of the little island, with its long stately avenues of coconut palms, its sheltering bowers of banyan trees, its groups of bananas, and groves of orange and other tropical trees too numerous and too varied to describe, seems one beautiful and universal park. Every few minutes I came across a vivid patch of scarlet, yellow, or white hibiscus ; great trailing lengths of blue convolvulus, many tendrilled and giant blossomed, garlanded the trees, and not unfrequently flung an almost impenetrable barrier across the path. These paths are separated from the universal park by—a fencing of barbed



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A CORAL GARDEN

wire ! But the little tram line, which terminates at the wharf, was bordered with turf of a moss-like softness, and even between its rails the grass grew thickly.¹

The whole island was encircled by a giant fringe of coral, white and glistening, at one side of which was a natural opening leading to the little harbour. The light at sunset upon this reef was like the refraction of some hidden prism, shimmering opalescent, a suffusion of vague and unspeakably lovely hues.

After walking for some time I suddenly came within sight of a palm-fringed lagoon. Upon its unruffled blue surface two native girls were paddling a small canoe. Their attire was slight, and their polished skins, gleaming with coconut oil, shone like mahogany. They stared for a moment at the new arrival with all the *naïveté* of children, then with a rippling laugh they paddled to the bank and began to talk. As I listened to the unknown accents of their musical tongue I was filled with bitterness to think

¹ I have described this island more particularly because it was the first I visited, and has ever since remained "a memory apart, virginal." But looking back I realise that Nukualofa is by no means a beautiful type of coral island, since in common with all the Tongan group it is absolutely flat, and wholly lacks that diversity of outline (due to volcanic agency) which is the leading characteristic of the Samoan and Fijian groups.

that though so near, we were nevertheless so far apart. A smile however is always current coin, and before we parted many a one had been exchanged.

In slight relief, amid the brilliant-hued orange-trees, the tall feathery-topped coconut palms, the dark green spreading bread-fruit trees, and the broad-leaved *pandanus* or screw-pines, the brown huts of the natives showed up at intervals. Flung down at random on the verdant carpet, which flourished up to their very doors, thatched with long screw-pine leaves and lashed together with coconut fibre, with never an angle between them, I have been assured, by more than one resident of authority, that they stand the brunt of a hurricane better than the best houses built by Europeans. Outside these huts, sitting or standing, or lounging about in indolent inaction, were native men, women, and children—dear little brown-skinned babies, innocent of any attire save their original “birthday suit,” rolled and tumbled on the grass. As I passed on my way the women and girls nodded and smiled, and gave me their musical greeting of “Mehola lelai,” and before I was out of sight called after me “Nofa, Nofa”—the native “Good-bye,” which means literally “Stay, stay.” And everywhere could be heard the tap tap of the kava stones, and the rhythmic beating out of the “tapa.”



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TONGA VILLAGE, WITH ROUND HOUSES

This "Tapa" (or "Ngata") cloth is very pretty. It is made from the bleached and beaten out bark of a tree, and is decorated with rude designs which the natives trace with a piece of charred stick, and which represent squares, circles, angles, stars, even at times the outline of the flying fox. The colouring matter used to complete the patterns is of a black or brown tint, and is made from a decoction of bark ; a piece of cloth, or hibiscus fibre is employed as a brush, and when the work is finished the effect is charming.

I tasted a green coconut plucked direct from the palm by a native, who, bribed by a shilling, scaled the long, straight stem at my request. The milk contained in the shell (though perhaps a trifle sickly) was deliciously cool, and on a hot day most refreshing.

The attire of the natives of the Tongan group is extremely picturesque and harmonises admirably with their surroundings. Holy Tonga and indeed all the islands of this group are subject to a curious law which enacts that all classes of natives, whether male or female, must wear an upper as well as a lower garment. Both men and women adorn themselves with flowers, garlands about their necks, wreaths of flowers in their hair. The air was heavy with the scent of orange blossom, cape jasmine, and frangipani.

I sat on the trunk of a fallen tree and watched the little sheeny blue-tailed lizards flicker to and fro, and indeed it was delicious to feel no fear of poisonous reptiles, for in these delectable isles there are none, no snakes—save the beautiful and harmless water snakes—no scorpions, no centipedes, not even the death-dealing spider of New Zealand.

Our steamer left Nukualofa that evening, and we took on board a number of natives bound for Samoa. The entire population of the island seemed to have gathered together in a picturesque group on the shore to bid them farewell ; and this group formed a brilliant foreground to our parting view of Tonga, with its green esplanade, its villa palace, its church and its white Government Offices, the latter of which stood boldly out against the groves of bananas and long feathery vistas of coconut palms.¹

We steamed out of the harbour of Nukualofa by a different passage to that by which we had entered, and before we passed the reef we had to make our way through a perfect network of little islands, all alike, palm-fringed and scattered about at random like flowers in a meadow.

Like beasts of prey the white waves leapt against the

¹ His Majesty King George of Tonga being in residence, the villa palace was inaccessible to visitors.

coral barrier, and to right and left of us for a brief space showed white gleams of reef, but a moment later we had left the treacherous surf behind us and were steaming across a deep purple fathomless ocean. As I stood on the deck still gazing shoreward, the foam of the waves became azure under my eyes, whilst delicately-coloured flying-fish, denizens of two elements, skimmed like gigantic sea-butterflies over the surface of the water, flitting to and fro in the uncontrolled enjoyment of life and motion.

That night the native passengers, rolled up in Tapa, their heads resting on hollow wooden pillows, camped on deck ; the scent of the coconut oil with which they anointed their sleek smooth bodies was quite overpowering, especially when blended with the fragrance of the cissies (or flower girdles) worn around their waists, and with that of the garlands of flowers and berries hung so lavishly about their necks.

A tropic night, and the moon at the full ! The pure white radiance threw everything into strong relief. The natives slept at intervals and danced at intervals, crooning a strange weird chant to the accompaniment of much beating of hands.

By daylight next morning we anchored in the roadstead of Lefuka, the principal island in the Haapai group.

A long low shore, a foreground of white sand, a fringe of coconut palms with thicker vegetation beyond, brown thatched roofs of native houses, and white ones of Europeans ! Such was Pangai town as seen from the deck of our steamer. Seaward, on the other hand, there was the already familiar line of coral reef and a score of " Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

The whole of our passengers, just six in number, landed for a tour of inspection. In front of nearly every native house, a horse was hobbled, but in spite of the abundance of green pasturage the unfortunate animals looked half starved, and their thin legs were so weak that I wondered how they could do any work at all. On quitting the town, however, we left the houses behind, and strolled away into the bush, where we again had only the green turf under our feet, and again saw round us an absolutely level country. Meanwhile, huge fronds of coconut palms did their best to shield us from the sun, and the broad leaves of the banana cast cool shadows across our path. Before we had gone far, the most wonderful lean, lank, long-legged, reddish-brown pigs went scudding across our track, and disappeared amongst the trees. They were the direct descendants, I was told, of the pigs left here by Captain Cook. It did



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HAAMUNGA OR TRILITHON IN TONGA

not take us more than an hour to walk right across Lefuka, until we reached its eastern shore. The tide was dead low, and we could see the outlines of the dry coral reefs, which connect all these islands as with a chain. On the way, one of our party related how, not so long ago, the coast was bodily raised twenty feet higher by an earthquake, and how the earthquake was followed by a great tidal wave. A halt was called, and while we rested on the coral beach and ate our fill of "mummy" apples¹—one of our company amused us with the account of a wonderful Haamunga or Trilithon in Tonga, which, alas, we had no chance of visiting. This Trilithon, which is about sixteen miles inland from Tongatabu, seems to afford evidence of the former existence, in Tonga, of an ancient civilisation, that of some bygone people who, in common with the Maories, were possessed of religious instincts far in advance of the conquering Polynesians, who succeeded them. It consists of two enormous upright blocks of stone with a massive slab on the top, the latter being curiously countersunk into the two uprights. The whole structure is strongly reminiscent of our cromlechs at Stonehenge and elsewhere, recalling

¹ More correctly mammy apples—the fruit of the "paw-paw" tree.

the theory of a universal sun worship. We talked this subject out as we sat, under the shade of the palms, on the sun-warmed beach, then we returned to the landing stage by another route.

On these low-lying islands the coconut palms thrive well and bear abundantly, for there is nothing to impede the passage of the strong salt breeze right across the level surface of the Haapaian group, and without this strong salt air the coconut cannot thrive.

From Lefuka we steamed to Vavau, but as our arrival in Vavau marks the second stage in my pilgrimage, I will reserve it for a fresh chapter. Henceforth, we were to be confronted by an entirely new type of landscape ; the reign of the level surface was ended.



HARBOUR OF VAVAU

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CHAPTER II

“The coral waxes, the palm grows, but man departs.”

From an old Tabitian proverb.

WE entered the land-locked harbour of Vavau in all the glory of a moon scarcely past the full. And what a contrast to the islands from which we had just parted ! On every side of us towered mountains, broken, rugged, height upon height, peak above peak. In every crevice of the mountain the forest harboured, and everywhere flourished the feathery palm, that Giraffe of Vegetables, as Stevenson so humorously describes it, nestling, crowding, climbing to the summit.

It was midnight before we anchored alongside the jetty. The morning light showed us all the varied beauty of the port of Neiaufu. In place of the level shores, rising

only a few feet above high-water mark, bold and rugged headlands jutted seawards, and every islet in the Archipelago was clear and definite. Let Stevenson, however, here speak in person, for though he is not dealing with this particular island, yet his description might have been written for it. "The land heaved up in peaks and rising vales ; it fell in cliffs and buttresses ; its colour ran through fifty modulations in a scale of pearl, rose and olive ; and it was crowned above by opalescent clouds. The suffusion of vague hues deceived the eye ; the shadows of clouds were confounded with the articulations of the mountain, and the isle and its unsubstantial canopy rose and shimmered before us like a single mass."

Wooded hills, which spring from the water's edge, surround what seems to be a beautiful lagoon, some four miles long and two wide. At the eastern end there is a very narrow boat-passage. Our entrance was effected by the western passage, which is also narrow but has deep water at the point. On either side were white signal beacons, such as I have seen at the mouth of the Brisbane. The great wharf to which we were moored was approached by a road of coral, white to the point of dazzlement in the tropic sunshine. The foreshore was being reclaimed by prison labour ; the prisoners, men as

well as women, looked sleek and well favoured, they chanted songs as they worked, and showed no signs about them whatever of ill-usage or over-strain.

There is no beach at Vavau. On the sloping banks, which are green to the water's edge, thatched houses peep through the orange-trees ; indeed the whole island seems one delightful orange grove, the sward was everywhere littered with the freshly fallen fruit, the air was fragrant with the subtle essence of blossom and fruit combined. With the exception of the coral road leading to the jetty, all the paths at Nieaufu (as at Nukualofa) are simply long stretches of green sward, overspread with orange-trees. We climbed a steep hill, and while we rested on the top, feasted our eyes upon a sight which was one to dream of. Everywhere little cone-shaped islands outlined with big-fronded palms, everywhere that wonderful violet sea, and between the golden gleam of the oranges we saw the deep blue of the sky. It was an ecstasy in colour, a vision rather than a prospect. From henceforth my standard of the beautiful was lifted to a higher plane, and the words "The eye hath not seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," had, for me, acquired a deeper and intenser significance.

On the way back we encountered a French Catholic

priest, and after a little chat the old man took us to his house and initiated us into the mysteries of Kava drinking. Stevenson tells us so much about Kava and Kava feasts, that I make no apology for describing the process. The priest's room was very plainly furnished, in the centre was the bowl carved out of a solid block of wood and standing on four legs. That it had been long in use was evident from the fine opalescent enamelling of the inside. Beside it were the Kava stones.

Two native girls appeared bearing the Kava—the root of the *Piper Methysticum*, about which in its raw state there was nothing at all distinctive. Pieces of the Kava were torn, or bitten off, pounded between the two stones and cast into the bowl. Then while one of the girls brought water and poured it upon the pounded root, the other, with shapely brown arms bare to the shoulder, kneaded the mass, until the whole virtue of the Kava was expressed into the water.

Not until the bowl was half full of a frothy, muddy mixture did the straining process begin. A lump of fibre, made from the bark of the yellow hibiscus, was cast into the Kava, and the girls with arms dipped in the mixture up to the elbow, proceeded to take up the liquor with this improvised sponge, wring it over the bowl till



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NATIVE GIRLS MAKING KAVA

it was dry, and fill it again, repeating this process until the fibre had absorbed all the gritty particles.

The Kava was now ready for drinking, and with great ceremony one of the girls filled a half coconut shell with the liquor and handed it to one of our number, who, as the custom is, drained it without drawing a breath, and then sent the empty cup spinning like a tee-to-tum across the floor to the girls.

My turn came soon and I never saw a more uninviting looking drink, nevertheless I boldly followed the example set me and emptied the shell. The bitter, hot, acrid taste seemed to me at first nauseating to the last degree—but after! To appreciate Kava you must estimate it from the standpoint of *After*. My mouth felt clean, cool, wholesome, and invigorated as it had never felt before, and never will again until by good chance I light upon another bowl of Kava.

“Have you found it good?” inquired the old priest in French. My “Mais oui, Monsieur, après,” raised a general laugh. Nevertheless the opinion was unanimous that it is only in the “Après” that you can enjoy Kava. To define a sensation is difficult, but most of us are familiar with the effect of the external application of menthol. Transfer that effect to an internal sensation (on a very hot

day), and you will then know something of the delights of Kava drinking.

That afternoon we hired a sailing-boat and paid a visit to a cave some four miles down the harbour. The entrance looked impossible for so large a boat as ours, but our native boatman hauled down the sail and assured us that it was all right. Like Brer Rabbit, we "lay low," and when we lifted ourselves up we were inside.

Wonderful, dreamlike, unreal, impossible : that was the general verdict. Like giant icicles that had never felt the touch of frost the huge, green, semi-transparent and sharply pointed stalactites clustered about the entrance. From floor to vaulted roof rose buttressed columns dividing the cave into shadowy alcoves, and as for size—you could put the Blue Grotto at Capri into one of those alcoves. The lofty arched roof was fretted like that of a cathedral, but it was the light, not the vast outlines, that arrested me, and held me spellbound—the weird effect of the sunshine without reflected through the medium of this dim water world.

I can describe what I saw, but I cannot hope to convey any idea of the sensation produced by the eye-witness. Gliding to and fro in sinuous coils were long striped water-snakes, blue and black, pink and black, green and

black. Did Matthew Arnold dream of such a cavern when he wrote :

“ When the sea snakes coil and turn,
Dry their mail, and bask in the brine ” ?

Our boatman caught two of the sheeny, harmless creatures, and after hooding them we carried them back to the steamer, but pity proved stronger than the lust of possession and we gave them their liberty. I can see them now (as one after the other I threw them over the side) making directly for the cave. Did they reach it? Who shall say?

Glued to the fretted roof were the nests of innumerable swallows, and in the dim innermost recesses queer bat-like creatures hung suspended by their claws. An eerie feeling possessed us, a sudden silence reigned, the impossible seemed possible here, the real unreal. One of our native boatmen struck the rock with the butt-end of an oar—it gave back a strange, reverberant, hollow sound, then from the darkness within came a weird, mocking echo.

With the help of a rope, furnished by our helmsman, I climbed a sort of natural stairway, and crouching on an overhanging ledge, looked down. The peculiar malachite green of the water now seemed intensified a

hundred-fold, and the boat, its occupants, even the coral garden below, became green under my eyes. The cave was as cold as winter inside, in spite of the tropical heat without—cold and yet airless, as if the spell of an enchantment held the place in thrall. One and all we were glad to back out of it, re-hoist the sail, and return to our floating home.

Not far from this cave was a barren rock, standing out above the sea, stark and sheer, a veritable All-Alone-Stone, only that there was no Madam Gairfowl perched thereon. Below this rock is a submarine cavern, only to be reached by diving. Here, so the legend goes, an island chief once held a beautiful maiden in thrall, until he won her to his will. He had stolen her from her tribe and here he hid her. In this same cavern, too, in more recent years, a maiden of Vavau saved the life of her wounded lover by nursing him secretly during the course of a tribal feud. For the details of these pretty stories, however, I must refer my readers to Mariner's "Tonga." I was further told that the captain of a British man-of-war once had the hardihood to dive in search of the entrance of this cave, and that he found it to be all that it was described, but that in returning to the surface he grazed his back against the coral, and died a few days later of acute blood poisoning.



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TOWN OF APIA

At sunset we heaved the anchor and steamed for Apia. Our course was still in a north-easterly direction and so continued for three hundred and forty-five miles, when we attained the Samoan or Navigator group. This last name was given by their discoverer, Bougainville, who christened them thus out of compliment to the dexterity of the natives, whom he found sailing their canoes far out at sea.

The group consists of ten inhabited islands, of which the principal are Savaai, Upolu, Tutuila, Manu'a Olosenga, Ofu, Manono, and Apolima. Upolu — Stevenson's Island—although not the largest, is by far the most important. It is forty miles long and ten broad. We passed along the eastern end, coasting along two lovely rocky islets covered with vegetation of the most varied green.

The capital of Upoli is Apia, and this town gives its name to the bay.

The Bay of Apia is crescent-shaped, having the point of Mulinuu for the western, and the point of Matatu for the eastern, tip of the horn. Although the coral reef stretches from tip to tip, there is, in the very middle, a natural gap in the submarine coral wall, deep enough and broad enough to give passage even to a man-of-war.

We cast anchor at daylight, and as I looked over the

side of the steamer a sense of familiarity pervaded the landscape, possibly to be accounted for by the fact that the slender, feathery palms had ceased to be distinctive features ; not that palms were lacking, but that their long, straight stems were crowded out by a dense growth of other trees. In one of his letters Stevenson himself comments on this, and implies that this "home likeness" formed one of the attractions which drew him to Upolu.

The little town of Apia nestles at the foot of a peaked and forest-clad mountain ; indeed the whole of the shore, which is everywhere green and level, is overshadowed by inland mountain tops.

At last I had attained the goal of my pilgrimage ; at last I was within hail of that lonely plateau, where all that was mortal of Robert Louis Stevenson was laid to rest some eight years ago.

I looked shoreward with eyes full of reverence and wonder. This island with its wooded peak was the "surfy palm-built bubble" of Gosse's wonderful poem. The rhythm of the words made music in my brain.

" Now the skies are pure above you, Tusitala,
Feathered trees bow down before you,
Perfumed winds from shining waters

Stir the sanguine-leaved hibiscus,
That your kingdom's dusk-eyed daughters
Weave about their shining tresses,
Dew-fed guavas drop their viscous
Honey at the sun's caresses,
Where eternal summer blesses
Your ethereal musky highlands."
"You are circled, as by magic,
In a surfy palm-built bubble, Tusitala.
Fate hath chosen, but the choice is
Half delectable, half tragic,
For we hear you speak like Moses,
And we greet you back enchanted,
But reply's no sooner granted
Than the rifted cloud-land closes."

This poem, which forms the dedication to *Russet and Silver*, was received by Stevenson only a few days before his death. The fact that he had barely read it ere the "rifted cloud-land" did indeed close upon him imparts an almost prophetic significance to the last two lines.

CHAPTER III

“Alas ! for Tusitala he sleeps in the forest.”

Native Lament.

VAILIMA is only about three miles from Apia, but the road ascends the whole way, and in this land “where it is always afternoon” one does not care for much exertion ; so a carriage was engaged to drive us thither, and we had John Chinaman for coachman.

That morning the captain and a fellow-passenger had urged us not to attempt the ascent of Mount Veea. “Go and see the house by all means, but the grave is impossible for ladies.” Only last trip,” said the captain, “two of our passengers, both comparatively young men, got lost in the bush on Mount Veea, never found the grave at all, and returned to the *Manipouri* dead beat, after keeping me waiting four hours. But I give you due warning, ladies,



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THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART

I shall not wait for you, don't think it for a moment. I shall just go off and leave you here." I can recall now the twinkle in his brown eyes as the captain spoke, a twinkle that gave the lie to his words. Nevertheless, in spite of all warnings, we, the only three ladies on board, adhered to our intention of making the ascent, though we promised to take a native guide to show us the way.

We drove up a long, winding hill, in a very dilapidated wagonette. I sat by the driver, and felt sorry for our pair of lean and scraggy horses as they toiled painfully upwards. The heat was stifling, and the still, tense air vibrated with every sound, like a tightly drawn string. At last we reached the Road of the Loving Heart. This road exists as a touching memorial to the high regard in which Tusitala—the story teller—was held by the natives. And here it may be well to add that the name of Tusitala was given to Stevenson, not because the Samoans knew or loved his books, but because it is their custom to define the individual either by his or her profession, by some trait or characteristic, or even by an article of attire. Hence when the chiefs inquired concerning this new arrival, "What does he do? How does he live?" they were told "He writes books; he tells stories"; and from that day onward he was "Tusitala, the Story Teller," just as

Mrs. Strong was (I believe) known as "The Flower-Giver" (I forget the native equivalent), because she was in the habit of giving flowers to her visitors.

This information came from Captain Crawshaw, who was himself a personal friend of the late novelist, and showed me, by the way, quite a number of letters he had received from Stevenson himself. One of them interested me particularly, since in it Stevenson begged the captain to try and discover the whereabouts of a friend of his who had got into trouble. "Save him from his worst enemy—himself. Bring him to me. Spare no expense in the matter. I will be answerable." Such was the substance of this letter as far as I can recall it, and it ended in the following characteristic fashion:—"Signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of my Maker, and the ink-pot."

"ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON."

But I am wandering into bye-ways, and I must hasten to return to Ala Loto Alofa (which is the Samoan equivalent for the name of the road referred to).¹ Without going into the political details the facts are, briefly, that Stevenson had been very good to the six imprisoned chiefs of Mataafa's following, and when their term of imprison-

¹ If the reader wishes to understand the political history of Samoa let him read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest Stevenson's "*Footnote to History*."



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KAVA FEAST GIVEN TO THE CHIEFS ON COMPLETION OF THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART

ment expired, these men, out of gratitude, cut a road through the bush to Vailima.

This work was a labour of love, the men who engaged in it were mostly of a high class, and they would neither take wages nor any sort of payment in kind. How this pleased Stevenson may be gathered from the following :—
“Now whether or not this impulse will last them through the road does not matter to me one hair. It is the fact that they have attempted it, that they have volunteered, and are now trying to execute, a thing that was never before heard of in Samoa. Think of it ! It is road making, the most fruitful cause, after taxes, of all rebellion in Samoa, a thing to which they could not be wiled with money, nor driven by punishment. It does give me a sense of having done something in Samoa after all.”¹

Stevenson had purposed putting up a notice of the new road, with its name in large letters with a few words of thanks for the chiefs, and a board was prepared for the purpose, painted and spaced for the lettering, when the chiefs arrived with their own inscription carefully written out. They begged so earnestly to have this printed instead that their wish was gratified. I was privileged to read the notice at the corner of the wide road leading to

¹ September, 1894, *Vailima Letters*.

the gates of Vailima.¹ The inscription is in Samoan, but translated into English runs as follows: "The Road of the Loving Heart" (Ala Loto Alofa), "Remembering the great care of his Highness Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever. It shall never be muddy, it shall endure, this road that we have dug."

On arrival at the finger-post our Chinaman was fain to be rid of us, so he announced, with a grin on his yellow face, "Horsee too muchee tired, missie walk now, missie catchee Vailima chop-chop." We had, however, been forewarned what to expect by the captain, so I merely remarked, "Savey, John no catchee Vailima, no catchee pay." And John drove on!

The Road of the Loving Heart, if very steep, has a fairly level surface. On either side are palms, bread fruit trees and bananas. Vailima (literally, "Five Rivers") is approached by a short drive, through a gate, into a lovely garden. Mrs. Strong tells me that the present owner has painted on that gate the words—"Villa Vailima." I am happy to say, however, that neither of us observed this atrocity.

¹ I am told this finger-post is now a thing of the past.



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THE HOUSE AT VAILIMA

The house itself is well designed and has a double verandah ; it is built of wood throughout, and stands on very high ground. On the left hand, as we faced the house, was the smaller villa once occupied by Mrs. Strong. On the right, towering up into the blue dome above, was Mount Veea, and on the wooded height (far beyond ken)—THE GRAVE.

Not a soul was visible, the place was bathed in sunshine and “steeped in silentness,” not even a dog barked at our approach. The crotons, dracaenas, and other plants of brilliant foliage made patches of vivid colour on the well-kept lawns, and everywhere was the scent of orange blossom, gardenia, and frangipani.

Under the shadow of the broad verandah the air was cool and pleasant, and we three lingered there awhile, as on the threshold of a temple. Before us was the really magnificent hall, some sixty feet long by forty wide, the door standing open, as in the days of Tusitala, but the dark panelling within was a thing of the past, and the walls were now painted a soft cool green.

All his furniture was gone—we were prepared for that—but the window was there, the window below which he lay on the low settle and breathed his last. As I stood there the whole scene flashed across my mental vision, with its awful, and perhaps merciful, unexpectedness.

He had recorded, often enough, his desire for such an end. "I wish to die in my boots, no more Land of Counterpane for me ! If only I could secure a violent end, what a fine success ! To be drowned, to be shot, to be thrown from a horse, aye, to be hanged, rather than pass again through that slow dissolution."

No less has he left on record his attitude towards impending death. "By all means begin your folio, even if the doctor does not give you a year, even if he hesitates about a month, make one brave push and see what can be accomplished in a week. It is not only in finished undertakings that we ought to honour useful labour. A spirit goes out of the man who means execution which outlives the most untimely end."

The hall of Vailima is (as Mr. Balfour tells us) quite the feature of the house. I have before referred to its size, it covers the whole area of the building. Facing us, as we entered, was the broad polished wooden staircase leading to the upper storey. We passed through the hall and out of a door on the other side of it ; somewhere in the back premises we unearthed a Samoan woman, attired in very scanty raiment, busily engaged in peeling potatoes. To her we addressed ourselves, first in English and then in German, but it was



THE HALL OF VAILIMA

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all to no purpose. Next we resorted to signs. Pointing to the mountain top, I said, "Tusitala." The word acted as a talisman, the brown face wreathed itself in smiles, the dark eyes kindled into comprehension. Motioning to us to remain where we were, she disappeared, and soon returned with a small brown girl, whose only garment was a ragged blue pinafore sewn up at the back.

The little maiden (she might have been ten or eleven years of age) ran up to us quite gleefully, intimated by smiles and gestures that she was prepared to act as guide, and at once possessed herself of our heavy basket of fruit. We followed her through a little wicket gate which led into a lovely grove with oranges on one side and bananas on the other, the leaves of the latter being larger and more glossy than any I have seen before or since. The play of light and shadow here was something to dream of, and often we stood still too enraptured to pursue our way. Soon we crossed a little mountain stream, clear as crystal, with but a single plank for bridge, and lingered awhile to admire the cream-breasted kingfishers and the numerous little¹ crayfish disporting themselves in and above the water. In time we left the cultivated land behind and followed a

¹ Since reading Mr. Balfour's *Life of Stevenson*, I am led to infer these last were a sort of fresh-water prawns.

slender path into the bush, where under foot was a dense growth of sensitive plant with delicately cut foliage and little fluffy pink ball-like blossoms. Our footsteps were marked by the quivering and shrinking of the shy, tremulous leaves, but as I looked back they once more stood bravely erect. This was the plant that baffled all poor Stevenson's efforts at eradication, living, thriving, ever renewing itself in spite of him.

"A fool," says he, "brought it to this island in a pot, and used to lecture and sentimentalize over the tender thing. The tender thing has now taken charge of this island, and men fight it, with torn hands, for bread and life. A singular insidious thing, shrinking and biting like a weasel, clutching by its roots as a limpet clutches to a rock."¹

The trees here were simply magnificent, the fern life too was everywhere abundant, exquisite ferns, such as we grow in our hot-houses at home. Trees, ferns, creepers, flowers were tangled together in a vast net-work of luxuriant vegetation, each individual plant fighting for its very existence, contending for its due share of light, and air, and space. Here it was that Stevenson conceived his poem of "The Woodman"; every word of it came home to me with

¹ *Vailima Letters*, November, 1890.

the inevitableness of absolute truth as we fought our way upward and onward.

“ I saw the wood for what it was,
The lost and the victorious cause,
The deadly battle pitched in line,
Saw silent weapons cross and shine,
Silent defeat, silent assault,
A battle and a burial vault.”

Stevenson's attitude towards nature was a very remarkable one. Like Wordsworth, he endued her with a real, living personality, but unlike Wordsworth, he never seems to enter into a direct communion with her. She does not soothe him into “a wise passiveness,” she rather inspires him with a strange, fierce energy. Take this passage, selected almost at random from one of his published letters to Sidney Colvin : “I wonder if any one ever had the same attitude to nature as I hold and have held for so long. “This business (of weeding) fascinates me like a tune or a passion, yet all the while I thrill with a strong distaste. The horror of the thing, objective and subjective, is always present in my mind, the horror of creeping things, a superstitious horror of the void and the powers about me, the horror of my own devastation and continual murders.

The life of the plants comes through my finger tips, their struggles go to my heart like supplications, I feel myself blood boltered—then I look back on my cleared grass, and count myself an ally in a fair quarrel, and make stout my heart.”

The living individual personality of nature is here as clearly recognised as Wordsworth himself recognised it, but the standpoint of regard is wholly different. Stevenson was aware of the spirit that clothed itself with the visible, but he was no dreamy lover enamoured of that spirit. He was rather (as he so often says) the ally in a fair quarrel, only desirous of bending Nature to his will, of pitting his strength against hers.

But I am digressing, and the mountain top and the grave are before me, and I am in the forest on my way thither. Now and again a tiny bright-coloured bird would flash across the path, now and again a huge trail of giant convolvulus, blue as the sky, would bar our progress. Over an hour had elapsed before we gained the summit, and the latter half of the ascent was by far the most difficult.

Small wonder that sixty natives were required to get the coffin up, and even so the question will always remain, How did they accomplish the feat? One may talk of the Road of the Loving Heart, but this was a veritable Via

Dolorosa, a road of Sorrow and of Pity. The path zigzagged through the forest until it ended in a slender, fern-grown, almost imperceptible bush-track. More than once it led over the face of the solid rock, but branches of creepers, by which it was easy to swing oneself up, were abundant, though still the top appeared to recede, and to become more and more unattainable.

The mosquitos made the lives of my two companions a burden ; on all sides of us we heard their sinister aerial trumpeting, the heat was insupportable—stifling, the very air seemed stagnant and dead, but, quite unawares, we were gradually nearing our goal. Suddenly our little brown-skinned guide, who was travelling ever so far ahead, in spite of the burden of our heavy basket of fruit, flung herself down on a small plateau just above us, and we, toiling painfully after, knew we had attained.

A minute later and we stood in reverent silence beside a massive sarcophagus, constructed of concrete and surrounded by a broad slab. Not an ideal structure by any manner of means, not even beautiful, and yet in its massive ruggedness it somehow suited the man and the place. The broad slab was strewn with faded wreaths and flowers, and on one side of the sarcophagus were inscribed Stevenson's name, with the date of his birth and death,

also these eight lines, familiar to all who have read his poems :

“ Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie,
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I lay me down with a will.
This be the verse you grave for me,
Here he lies where he longed to be,
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.”

On the other side was an inscription in Samoan, which translated is “ Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God ; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried.” On either side of this text was graven a thistle and a hibiscus flower.

The chiefs have tabooed the use of firearms, or other weapons, on Mount Veea, in order that the birds may live there undisturbed and unafraid, and build their nests in the trees around Tusitala’s grave.

We remained on the plateau for over an hour resting our weary limbs, and eating our lunch of fruit ; and during that time we sat on the broad sun-warmed slab. A tiny lizard, with a golden head, a green body, and a blue tail,



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VILLAGE OF VAILIMA FROM STEVENSON'S GRAVE

flickered to and fro. Overhead a huge flying fox, with outspread "batty wings" sailed majestically. We seemed alone in the world, we four human beings, and as we gazed about us we saw everywhere, far beneath us, the beautiful "sapphire-spangled marriage-ring of the land," and down from us to the blueness, and beyond us, to an infinitude of distance, billow upon billow of wooded heights. Sitting there, on that green and level plateau on the summit of the mountain, my thoughts turned involuntarily to the last lofty resting-place of Browning's "Grammarian."

" Well, here's the platforn, here's the proper place !

Hail to your purlieus,

All ye high flyers of the feathered race,

Swallows and curlews !"

" Here, here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,

Peace let the dew send !"

The wind sighed softly in the branches of the *Tavau* trees, from out the green recesses of the *Toi* came the plaintive coo of the wood-pigeon. In and out of the branches of the magnificent *Fau* tree, which overhangs the grave, a kingfisher, sea-blue, iridescent, flitted to and fro, whilst a

scarlet hibiscus, in full flower, showed up royally against the gray lichened cement. All around was light and life and colour, and I said to myself, "He is made one with nature"; he is now, body and soul and spirit, commingled with the loveliness around. He who longed in life to scale the height, he who attained his wish only in death, has become in himself a parable of fulfilment. No need now for that heart-sick cry :—

" Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I."

No need now for the despairing finality of :—

" I have trod the upward and the downward slopes,
I have endured and done in the days of yore,
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope,
And I have lived, and loved, and closed the door."

Death has set his seal of peace on the unequal conflict of mind and matter ; the All-Mother has gathered him to herself.

In years to come, when his grave is perchance forgotten, a rugged ruin, home of the lizard and the bat, Tusi-tala—the story teller—"the man with a heart of gold " (as I so often heard him designated in the Islands) will live, when it may be his tales have ceased to interest, in the tender



THE STAIRCASE, VAILIMA

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remembrance of those whose lives he beautified, and whose hearts he warmed into gratitude.

So we left him, "still loftier than the world suspects, living and dying," and once more, following the footsteps of our guide, we took up that ferny moss-grown track. It was scarcely less easy to scramble down the steep descent than it had been to toil upwards. But "time and the hour run through the roughest day," and we eventually arrived at the bottom, torn and scratched and not a little weary, but well content, only somewhat regretful that the visit to the grave was over and not still to come, comforting each other with the recollection that the house yet remained to be explored.

Vailima is not much changed since the days when Robert Louis Stevenson lived there. Where the walls had been, in the late native war, riddled with shot, they had been renewed, but so exactly on the old lines that the change was scarcely perceptible. Although the house has been added to, and in my estimation considerably improved thereby, yet the old part remains intact.

Herr Conrade, the manager for Herr Kunz, the present owner, was kind enough to show us everything, but naturally Stevenson's suite of rooms were the only ones that possessed any special interest. First his bedroom, then

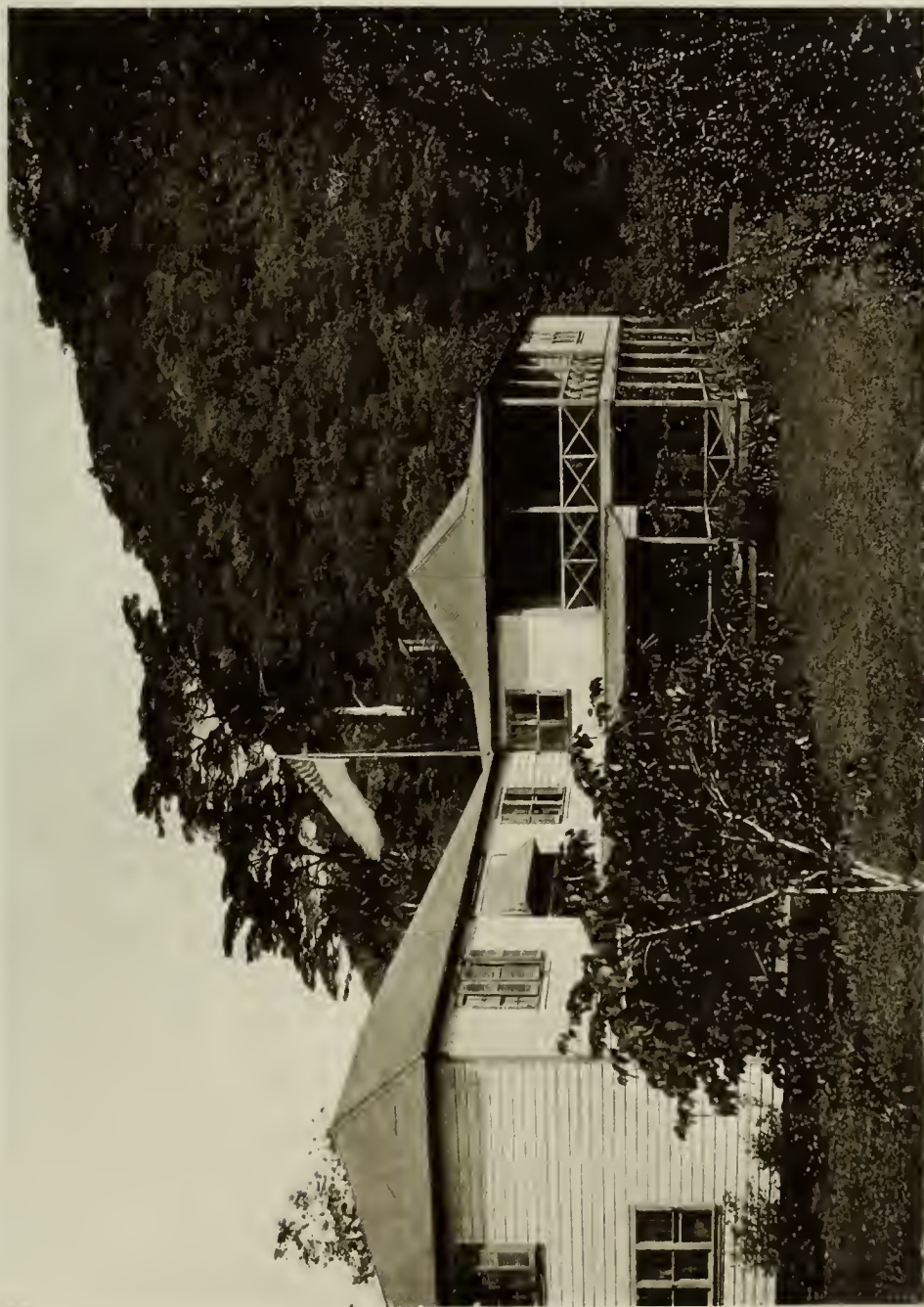
his library, and lastly his Temple of Peace, the innermost shrine where he wrote, and which, opening as it did on to the upper verandah, commanded a magnificent view of sea and mountain. From the verandah could be seen the gleam of the sunlight on the breaking surf around the far distant bay. On the left, fronting seaward, were the heights where he was laid to rest.

Between two of the upper rooms (the bedroom and the library), there used to be a square hole, just large enough for a man to crawl through on hands and knees.¹ This was formerly the only entrance, but the present owner has had a door put up on which the outline of the hole is still indicated.

With the exception of these rooms, Vailima might have belonged to any other European of wealth and taste.

The question has been raised, Was Stevenson contented in Samoa? Did those three years bring him pleasure? May we not answer, Yes! and not only pleasure but profit. For the profit, note the books written during this period, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*!

¹ I have since I wrote this been informed by a member of the family that although the hole existed it was not between the library and the bedroom.



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VAILIMA

For the pleasure he shall speak for himself, and mark the subtle distinction he draws between happiness and pleasure. "I was only happy once—that was at Hyères, it came to an end from a variety of reasons, decline of health, change of place, increase of money, age with his stealing steps; since then, as before then, I know not what it means. But I know pleasure still, pleasure with a thousand faces and none perfect, a thousand tongues all broken, a thousand hands and all of them with scratching nails. High among these I place this delight of weeding out here, alone by the garrulous water, under the silence of the high wood, broken by incongruous sounds of birds."

"Intense in all he did, Tusitala could do nothing by halves," said a man who knew him well. "Whether it was at clearing land or writing books he always worked at the top of his power, and enjoying as he did the life of the gay house party in the evening, he would rise at daylight to make up his loss of time." His was the old, old story of the sword that wore out the scabbard—flesh and spirit at issue, and the flesh so frail, so unequal to the conflict. There was an Austrian Count in Upolu whom the captain took us one day to see, and who, to use the colonial word, "batched" in a little bungalow in the midst of a huge coconut plantation.

The bungalow contained but one room—the bedroom, and the broad encircling verandah served for sitting room. Here we sat and talked about Tusitala, and drank to his memory. The conversation turned on Vailima, and our host took us within and showed us the only two adornments that his room possessed. Over his camp bed hung a framed photograph bearing the inscription “My friend Tusitala,” and fronting the bed was another of the house and Mount Veea.

“So,” he said, “I keep him there, for he was my saviour, and I wish ‘good night’ and ‘good morning,’ every day, both to himself and to his old home.” The count then told us that when he was stopping at Vailima he used to have his bath daily on the verandah below his room. One lovely morning he got up very early, got into the bath, and splashed and sang, feeling very well and very happy, and at last beginning to sing very loudly, he forgot Mr. Stevenson altogether. All at once there was Stevenson himself, his hair all ruffled up, his eyes full of anger. “Man,” he said, “you and your infernal row have cost me more than two hundred pounds in ideas,” and with that he was gone, but he did not address the count again the whole of that day. Next morning he had forgotten the count’s offence and was just as friendly as ever, but



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NATIVE FEAST AT VAILIMA

—the noise was never repeated ! Another of the count's stories amused me much. “ An English lord came all the way to Samoa in his yacht to see Mr. Stevenson, and found him in his cool Kimino sitting with the ladies and drinking tea on his verandah ; the whole party had their feet bare. The English lord thought that he must have called at the wrong time, and offered to go away, but Mr. Stevenson called out to him, and brought him back, and made him stay to dinner. They all went away to dress, and the guest was left sitting alone in the verandah. Soon they came back, Mr. Osborne and Mr. Stevenson wearing the form of dress most usual in that hot climate, a white mess jacket, and white trousers, but their feet were still bare. The guest put up his eyeglass and stared for a bit, then he looked down upon his own beautifully shod feet and sighed. They all talked and laughed until the ladies came in, the ladies in silk dresses, befrilled with lace, but still with bare feet, and the guest took a covert look through his eyeglass and gasped, but when he noticed that there were gold bangles on Mrs. Strong's ankles and rings upon her toes, he could bear no more and dropped his eyeglass on the ground of the verandah breaking it all to bits.” Such was my informant's story, which I give for what it is worth.

On our way back to the steamer we visited the lovely waterfall referred to in *Vailima Letters*, also the Girls' School for the daughters of Native Chiefs. The latter affords most interesting testimony to the value of mission work. The principal of the school—a German lady—told us that both Stevenson and his mother took the deepest interest in this school, and subscribed liberally towards its support.

We had, I regret to say, very little time in Apia, and no time for Papasea, or The Sliding Rock, which lies some miles inland. The natives love to shoot this fall, and many of the white folk of both sexes follow their example.

Next morning we were off again, steaming for the other side of the island, where we stayed two days shipping copra. Here I met many of Stevenson's friends, and can recall a chat I had with the photographer to whom I am indebted for several of the photographs in this book. He was a thin spare man, about six-and-twenty years of age, and not so very unlike the pictures of Stevenson himself.

"I had but recently come to Samoa," he said, "and was standing one day in my shop when Mr. Stevenson came in and spoke. 'Mon,' he said, 'I tak ye to be a Scotsman like mysel.'"



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ONE OF THE FIVE RIVERS FROM WHICH VAILIMA TAKES ITS NAME

“I would I could have claimed a kinship,” deplored the photographer, “but alas! I am English to the backbone, with never a drop of Scotch blood in my veins, and I told him this, regretting the absence of the blood tie.

“I could have sworn your back was the back of a Scotchman,” was his comment, “but,” and he held out his hand, “you look sick, and there is a fellowship in sickness not to be denied.” I said I was not strong, and had come to the Island on account of my health. “Well then,” replied Mr. Stevenson, “it shall be my business to help you to get well; come to Vailima whenever you like, and if I am out, ask for refreshment, and wait until I come in, you will always find a welcome there.”

At this point my informant turned away, and there was a break in his voice as he exclaimed, “Ah, the years go on, and I don’t miss him less, but more; next to my mother he was the best friend I ever had: a man with a heart of gold; his house was a second home to me.”

“You like his books, of course.”

“Yes!” (this very dubiously), “I like them, but he was worth all his books put together. People who don’t know him, like him for his books. I like him for himself, and I often wish I liked his books better. It strikes me that we in the Colonies don’t think so

much of them as you do in England, perhaps we are not educated up to his style." And this is the class of comment I heard over and over again in the Colonies, from men who liked the man, but had no especial liking for his books. Is it that Robert Louis Stevenson appeals first and foremost to a cultured audience? Surely not. Putting the essays out of court, his books are one and all tales of adventure, stories of romance. The interest may be heightened by style—by the use of words that fit the subject, as a tailor-made gown fits its wearer—but the subject is never sacrificed to the style. It seems to me that one of my friends on the *Manipouri* (himself a great reader and no mean critic) came very near solving the problem when he said, "Frankly, much as I like the man, I don't care one straw about his writings. I've got on board this boat *The Master of Ballantrae*, *The Black Arrow*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Ebb Tide*. They all read like so many boys' books, and when I became a man I put away childish things. I've plenty of adventure and excitement in my life, and I want a book that tells me about the home life in the old country, or else an historical novel. Give me Thomas Hardy, or Mrs. Humphry Ward, or Marion Crawford, or Antony Hope.



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ANOTHER OF THE FIVE RIVERS

My bad taste, I daresay, but it is so, and I am not alone in my verdict, although I reckon the majority of the folk, this side of the world, would prefer Marie Corelli or Mrs. L. T. Meade."

I cannot leave Samoa without saying a few words about the natives, in whom Tusitala took so deep an interest.

As I write there rises before my mental vision a crowd of brown-skinned men, women, and children, their bodies glistening with coconut oil, and looking as sleek as a shoal of porpoises. Supple of limb, handsome of feature, the men are mostly possessed of reddish or yellow-tinted hair, which stands straight out from their heads in a stiff mop. The colour is due to the rubbing in of a much prized description of red clay, and the stiffness to their constant use of coral lime, for purposes of cleanliness.

All the men wear the kilt of the South Seas, the *sulu*, *ridi*, or *lava-lava*, and as often as not a tunic besides. Nearly all the women are clothed in "pinafore" dresses, infinitely graceful and becoming. Men and women alike adorn themselves with flowers, wreaths of flowers in their hair, flowers interwoven in their *sulu's*,

garlands of flowers around the neck, in addition to countless strings of shells and beads.

That they loved Tusitala with a deep and lasting affection is undoubted, and if proof were needed this touching little story may be taken as but one of many evidences. Sosimo, one of his servants, went out of his way to do Tusitala an act of personal kindness. In expressing his gratitude Stevenson said, "Oh ! Sosimo, great is the service." "Nay, Tusitala," replied the Samoan, "greater is the love." The following is the Native Lament composed by one of the Chiefs at the time of Stevenson's death. The translation is by Mr. Lloyd Osborne, Stevenson's step-son and able collaborator. I was allowed to copy the poems from the little pamphlet kindly lent me by the Captain.¹

NATIVE LAMENT FOR TUSITALA.

Listen oh ! this world as I tell of the disaster,
That befell in the late afternoon,
That broke like a wave of the sea,
Suddenly and swiftly blinding our eyes.

¹ Written at the time of his death for distribution among his personal friends, etc.



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DANCE OF SAMOAN NATIVES

Alas ! for Lois who speaks, tears in his voice,
Refrain, groan, and weep, oh, my heart in its sorrow !
Alas ! for Tusitala who rests in the forest.

Aimlessly we wait and wonder, Will he come again ?
Lament, oh Vailima, waiting and ever waiting ;
Let us search and inquire of the Captains of Ships,
"Be not angry, but has not Tusitala come ?"
Tuila, sorrowing one, come hither,
Prepare me a letter, I will carry it.

Let her Majesty, Queen Victoria, be told,
That Tusitala, the loving one, has been taken home.
Refrain, groan, and weep, oh, my heart in its sorrow !
Alas ! for Tusitala, who rests in the forest.

Alas ! my heart weeps with anxious pity,
As I think of the days before us,
Of the white men gathering for the Christmas assembly ;
Alas ! for Alola,¹ left in her loneliness,
And the men of Vailima, who weep together,
Their leader being taken ;
Refrain, groan, and weep, oh, my heart in its sorrow !
Alas ! for Tusitala, who sleeps in the forest.

Alas ! oh, my heart, it weeps unceasingly,
When I think of his illness,
Coming upon him with so fatal a swiftness,

¹ Alola—literally, the "loved one."

Would that it had waited a word or a glance from him,
Or some token from us of our love.
Refrain, groan, and weep, oh, my heart in its sorrow !
Alas ! for Tusitala who sleeps in the forest.

Grieve oh, my heart ! I cannot bear to look on,
At the chiefs who are assembling.
Alas ! Tusitala, thou art not here ;
I look hither and thither in vain for thee,
Refrain, groan, and weep, oh, my heart in its sorrow !
Alas ! for Tusitala, he sleeps in the forest.



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FIJI

CHAPTER IV

THE AFTERMATH

THE object of my journey was attained. Samoa, with its mist-swept mountains, its sun-lit waterfalls, its gleaming “ethereal musky highlands,” lay behind me, dim as a dream, a pictured memory of the past ; and yet I had not done with the Islands. At two, if not three, of the Fijian group, we were to ship copra and sugar ; and report had said that the Fiji Islands were more lovely than the Samoan. So I add a valedictory chapter—an epilogue in fact—contenting myself with the very briefest of descriptions, trusting that my illustrations will supply the missing details.

We were bound for Levuka, and we passed en route the small island of Apolima, for which Stevenson conceived so great an admiration, although I fancy he never landed there, but only saw it, as I did, from the deck of a steamer.

Basking in the golden radiance of the evening light, Apolima looked like the long-lost Island of Avilion,

“Where falls nor rain, nor hail, nor any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.”

In the centre of the island is an extinct crater, and this crater is all one luxuriant tangle of dense bush. Here and there among the trees peeped out the brown huts of native Chiefs, for Apolima is a sacred island, and only the high Chiefs are privileged to dwell there. Next day we sighted Levuka, which looked more like a mountain range than an island.

The coral barrier extends for a mile and a half beyond the shore of Levuka, the reef showing occasional openings, and within one of these openings was the harbour.

These openings are like so many gates into fields of calm water, and fatal indeed would be any attempt to force a passage, for on the treacherous reef itself there is always to be seen the line of churned-up foam, and always to be heard, for miles away, the thunder of the surf. Here was the piteous spectacle of many a wreck, the bare ribs of death showing above the merciless coral.

At Apia the harbour lights showed through the gaunt skeleton of the *Adler*, and just outside the roadstead of Levuka my attention was drawn to all that was left of an East Indiaman.

If the coral could but speak what tales might it not tell of poor, drenched, fordone humanity, clutching with bleeding hands at what was so cruel and so inexorable—now sucked back by the indrawn breath of the waves, and now flung remorselessly forward on to the beautiful, bared teeth of the reef, until Death, more merciful than Life, put an end to their sufferings.

As we passed the reef I noticed that the vivid blue *within* the natural harbour was separated from the “foamless, long-heaving, violet ocean” *without*, by a submarine rainbow.

Every colour was here represented and every gradation of colour. It looked as if the sun were shining below the water through the medium of some hidden prism.

“Is it always beautiful like this?” I asked one of my friends on board who had spent many years in these parts, and who with eyes intently gazing shoreward, stood beside me on the upper deck.

“Always,” was the prompt reply, “at least, I have never seen it otherwise. Looks like a necklace of opals, does it not?”

“ What causes the colour ? ”

“ I have been waiting for that question, and it's a difficult one to answer. I should say it was due to the difference of depth at which the patches of coral, seaweed, and white sand are to be found, and the effect of the sunshine on them through the clear, shallow, greenish water that covers the irregular surface of the reef. The shades of colour vary with the ebb and flow of the tide. I've seen it through a golden haze, and I've seen it through a violet haze, but always with these prismatic colours ; it is at its very best at noontide. If you look over the side of the steamer you will see how the colours lie, not on the surface, but below the water—the deeper you can see, the more varied and intense the colour.”

On landing at Levuka it needed no one to tell us that desolation in the form of a hurricane had recently swept over the island. The ruined church confronted us, with ruined houses, and toppled over palms, the entire beach was strewn with broken shells, rainbow-coloured fragments of departed loveliness. We landed and took a nearer survey of the disaster. At the little noisy wharf crowds of natives pressed goods on us for sale, among them being lovely baskets of coral, conch shells, *sulu's* and *tapa*. The Roman Catholic church had escaped, as by a



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miracle, for all around it were fallen palms. We entered and admired the inlaid (native) wood-work, and the beautiful pink shell, on a carved wooden stand, that served as a font.

We left Levuka in the evening and reached Suva early next morning. I was awakened by the shrill trumpeting of conch shells, and hurrying on deck I saw alongside of us a boat full of natives, several of whom held conch shells to their mouths, and made a truly ear-piercing sound. I attempted to buy the largest of these shells, but its native owner refused to sell it.

In some respects Suva was the most picturesque island that we visited. The outlines were more rugged and varied than those of Samoa, and the growth of bush was certainly more luxuriant. One curiously rounded mountain peak went by the name of The Devil's Thumb. We landed at seven o'clock, in the cool of the morning, and the delicious fragrance of the air left an abiding impression. After some discussion as to the best manner of spending our last day ashore, we decided to hire a little steam launch and go up the River Rewa as far as the sugar factory and plantation. This we did, and saw amongst other novelties the scarlet and black land crabs that live in holes along the mud banks on either side, as well

as the oysters clinging to the branching roots of the mangroves.

The sugar plantation was very interesting, as we here saw the natives at work in the cane-fields, but the factory was hot, sticky, and heavy with the nauseating smell of brown sugar. We returned at seven o'clock, and after dinner made a tour of inspection in the town.

Suva, being the capital of the Fiji Islands, is quite an imposing little place. There are no turf roads here but streets with shops and pavements, all well lighted, and gay with colour. We bought many curiosities and returned to the steamer laden with our treasures.

Next morning we left for Sydney, and although we touched at several little atolls en route, we only landed at two of them, and then only for about an hour.

So ended my tour. I set out on my pilgrimage with but one end in view, namely, THE GRAVE. I returned with "rich eyes and poor hands." I had attained, but my attainment was shadowed by regret, for I had left my heart behind me, "my soul" had gone "down with these moorings, whence no windlass might extract nor any diver fish it up."

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